

Inside today

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As the fifth parliament starts its session today, A. M. A. Muhith, a former Finance Minister of Bangladesh, writes on issues and priorities for the nation. Page 4

International

The UN Security Council voted a cease-fire resolution asking Iraq to destroy weapons of mass destruction. US will not pull out troops until Iraq fulfils truce terms. Page 5

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Dhaka Day by Day
Aerobics has caught on in Dhaka and are held in places ranging from Sonya's Beauty Saloon to the cafeteria hall in the American School. Page 3

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NEWS BRIEFS

AL to move bill for Parliamentary form

The Awami League parliamentary party has decided to bring a Constitutional Amendment Bill-1991 to switch over to a parliamentary form of government from the present presidential form, reports BSS.

Pak envoy to arrive

Pakistan's special envoy arrives Dhaka on Saturday carrying a message from Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif for Begum Khaleda Zia, an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs told newsmen Thursday, reports UNB.

Azad Dy Leader of Opposition

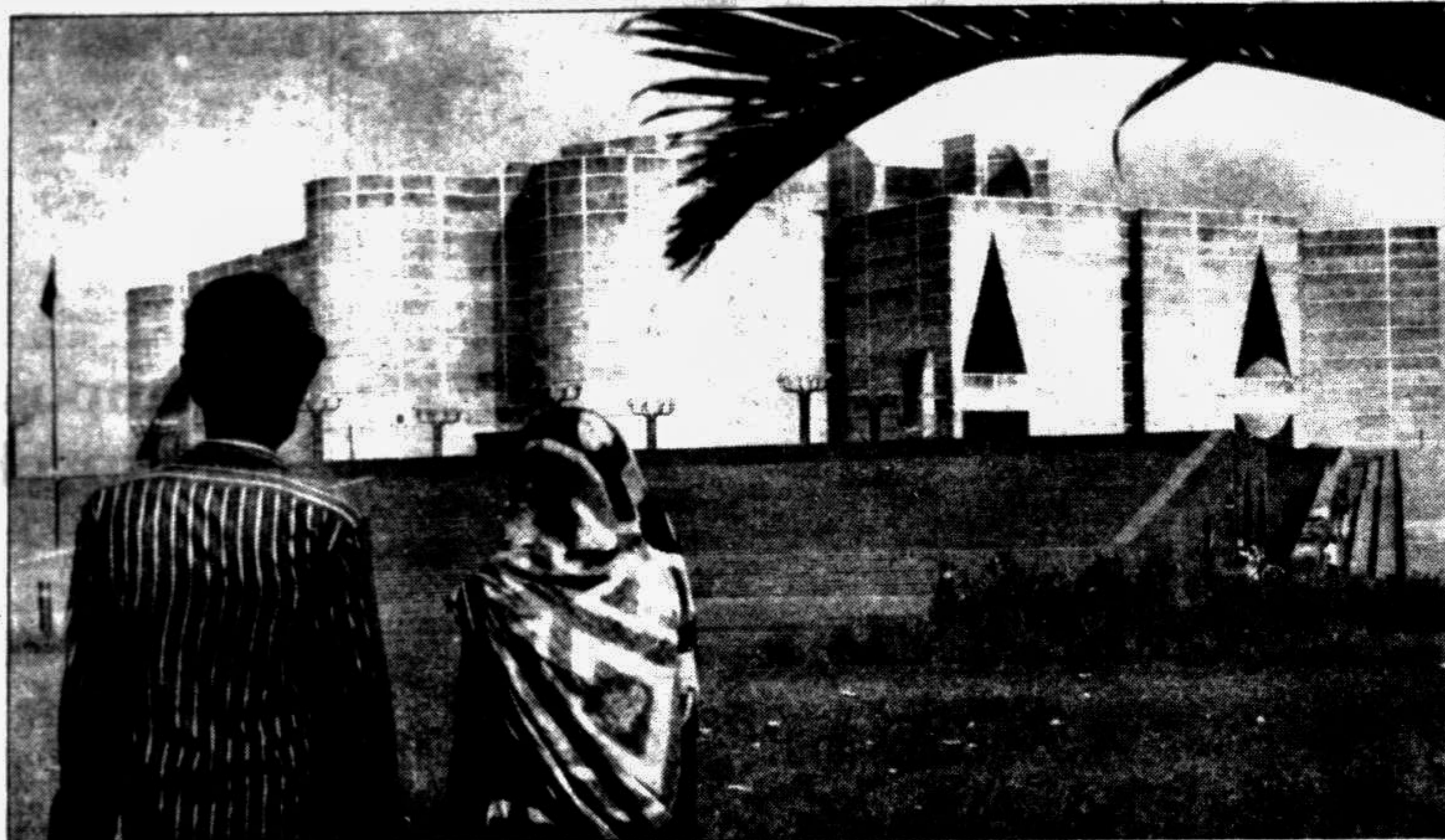
Awami League Presidium Member Abdus Samad Azad MP, has been officially recognised as Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, reports UNB.

National heroes

The Five-Party Alliance Thursday called for the new Parliament to declare all Martyrs of the anti-autocracy movement as 'national heroes' in its opening session, reports UNB.

UZ bye-election

Chairman posts of 25 upazila parishads have fallen vacant and the Election Commission has directed the concerned returning officers to take steps for holding bye-election in those posts immediately, an election commission press release said last night, reports BSS.



Looking at the Sangshad Bhaban (Parliament Building) with new hopes. —Star photo

Plea to attend parliament session turned down Ershad barred from making statement to press

By Staff Correspondent



Ershad: nonplussed? — Star photo

A petition for adjournment of the Tribunal in order to enable deposed President Ershad to attend parliament session beginning today (Friday) was rejected on Thursday.

Judge Mohammad Habibullah also passed an order prohibiting Ershad's making any statements to the press during the recess or immediately after the adjournment of the Tribunal, set up to try Ershad on charges of illegally possessing arms.

The Judge also cautioned the press to be objective in reporting and not to misquote any statement on the Tribunal's proceedings.

Judge Mohammad Habibullah also cautioned the Defence Lawyer Kazi Shahadat Hossain about his unbecoming behaviour in the court.

Submitting the petition for adjournment on behalf of the accused Defence Counsel Strajul Haque said, "the prayer

for adjournment was not made as a matter of right of the accused, but because the court can always grant adjournment petition."

Attorney General Aminul Haq strongly opposed the petition.

He quoted Rule 172 of the Parliament Procedure and said that the accused who is detained, has no right to enjoy such a privilege. He also said that he had conducted the case of Syed Moqbul Ahmed, who was an MP from Sylhet in 1986 and he also cited the case of Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan who was denied such a privilege.

Before the petition was made Ershad who was sitting in the dock also made a verbal approach to the Judge to allow him to attend parliament by adjourning the trial.

On hearing both sides the learned Judge ruled out the

WB for early prioritization of public investment programmes

The World Bank has suggested the government for early completion of a "realistic and credible" prioritization of the public investment programme for increased aid commitments from donors in the Paris consortium meeting scheduled for May 29-30, reports UNB.

Wrapping up its review meetings with government officials lasting about a fortnight, See Page 12 Col. 4

BSC vessel detained at Singapore port

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Apr 4: A Bangladesh flag carrier 'Banglar doot', was detained this morning at a Singapore port for not paying outstanding fuel bill.

The outstanding bill amounts to 69,230 Singapore dollars, a Bangladesh Shipping See Page 12 Col. 1

A unique parliament goes into session amid new hopes today

By Staff Correspondent

The inaugural session of the fifth Jatiya Sangsad (parliament) begins today at 9 am amid high hopes among the people for shaping a democratic polity.

The new parliament, formed after a mass upsurge is expected to solve constitutional issues, and strengthen democratic institutions destroyed in nine years of autocratic rule.

It is the first parliament in independent Bangladesh which represents all shades of opinion. Its election has been recognized as free and fair. None boycotted the election. The fifth Parliament is

unique in that two ladies Begum Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina are leading its Treasury and Opposition benches. It is also the first parliament in independent Bangladesh which has a very strong opposition. The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party commands 164 seats and the opposition 156 seats. By election in 10 remaining seats are scheduled to be held soon.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has earned a commanding majority in the House by receiving support from 20 members of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, Bangladesh Awami League has 87 seats. Commu-

nist Party of Bangladesh five and Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BKSAL) has four seats in the House.

Ganatantri Party, Islami Otkya Jote, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Straj), Bangladesh Workers Party, National Democratic Party, and Bangladesh National Awami Party(M) have one seat each in the House which also has three independent members.

The inaugural sitting will begin with Shamsul Huda Chowdhury in the chair as under Article 74 (6) of the Constitution the Speaker or Deputy Speaker shall be See Page 12 Col. 7

Age limit for govt jobs raised to 30 Tax on holdings upto 25 bighas goes

The government Thursday decided to waive tax on holdings upto 25 bighas of land from Pahela Baishakh (April 15) next and raise the age limit for entering into government jobs from 27 to 30, reports BSS.

The decision was taken at a special Council of Ministers meeting presided over by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. The meeting held at Bangabhaban, reviewed the programmes and pledges given by the BNP, to the people before the elections and steps taken so far to implement those.

The meeting decided to exempt the recovery of defaulting agricultural loan upto Taka five thousand, including the interest accrued thereon.

The Council of Ministers further decided to stay all certificate proceedings in respect of these agriculture loans, and also to stay certificate cases relating to land development tax upto 25 bighas.

The meeting discussed the problems of session jam in different educational institutions and the consequent sufferings of the students. It observed that the problem of session jam was creating an uncertain future for the students. In this connection, the Council of Ministers was informed that a committee had been formed to recommend ways and means to solve this problem.

The age-limit for entering into government jobs was raised to 30 years from the existing in view of the time lost by the university graduates due to session jams.

The meeting decided to fix a time limit for processing pension papers for retired government officers to minimise the difficulties faced by the pensioners because of bureaucratic practices.

The meeting was informed that steps had been taken to publish white paper on ir- See Page 12 Col. 4

A.R. Biswas named BNP's Speaker candidate

Star Report

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has nominated Abdur Rahman Biswas of Bakkerganj-5 for the post of Speaker of the fifth parliament while Sheikh Razzak Ali of Khulna-2 has been chosen as Deputy Speaker candidate.

The BNP Standing Committee meeting, which was also attended by other leaders of the party took the decision on Thursday mid- See Page 12 Col. 2

Moudud granted bail

Former Vice-President

Moudud Ahmed was granted bail Thursday by the Division Bench of the High Court comprising Justice Abdul Bari Sarkar and Justice Habibur Rahman Khan, reports UNB.

The Court granted bail on the ground that allegation made in the FIR was vague and the authority failed to show the actual amount of money allegedly defalcated by the de-

Moudud allegedly defalcated money in the modernisation project of the Ghorasal Fertilizer Factory when he was the Prime Minister and holding the portfolio of Industry. The project was allotted Taka 254.02 million plus 9850 million Yen.

A case was earlier brought against Moudud Ahmed for criminal breach of trust under sections 409 and 109 of the Penal Code, and under section 5(2) of the Anti-corruption Act.

An application for bail was filed on behalf of the detenu on March 21 last in the Division See Page 12 Col. 8

5 JP MPs to miss first session of parliament

By Staff Correspondent

Five Jatiya Party members of parliament including former President H.M. Ershad are unlikely to attend the inaugural session of Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) today.

Another JP MP, former vice-president Moudud Ahmed, may however, be freed from the gao today following granting him bail by the Supreme Court. Sources said Moudud's papers were being readied last night to pave the way for his attending the inaugural session.

An appeal from former See Page 12 Col. 7

Jamaat resents JS sitting arrangement

A three-member delegation of Jamaat-e-Islami led by its parliamentary party leader Maulana Mottur Rahman Nizami called on Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, Thursday, reports UNB.

During the meeting at President's Secretariat, Nizami told the Acting President that his party had lent support to BNP for a very limited purpose — ensuring a stable government. See Page 12 Col. 8

Shekhar suffers double blow as Hindus stage rally for Babri Mosque handover

NEW DELHI, Apr 4: Indian Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar suffered a double blow today losing legislative majority in a key province and suffering a split in another as hundreds of thousands of Hindus assembled here in a massive show of strength to demand the handover of Babri Mosque, reports AFP.

His Janata Dal-S (People's Party-Socialist) was reduced to a minority in the assembly of Uttar Pradesh state when former Premier Rajiv Gandhi's Congress (I) Party ended its vital support for the provincial

government. The 425 member legislature was terminated less than halfway through its five-year term, paving the way for fresh polls in the electorally crucial northern state of 110 million people, India's most populous. Mulayam Singh Yadav, a

close lieutenant of Shekhar will remain as caretaker Chief Minister until the polls are held simultaneously with May elections to the federal parliament, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said.

The Janata Dal-S suffered another blow minutes afterwards when its unit in the western state of Gujarat split away to form a regional party.

Gujarat Chief Minister Chimanbhai Patel announced the decision in the city of Ahmedabad, paving the way for a state-level alliance with the Congress (I) to stay on in power, PTI said.

The developments were widely seen as the death knell for any lingering hopes of a realignment between the Janata Dal-S and the Congress (I) at the national level. Yadav and Patel are both key players in national politics and took much of the credit for helping Shekhar become Prime Minister in November 1990 with Congress (I) support.

That alliance proved tenuous and finally collapsed in March, when Shekhar resigned in a huff and called fresh general elections.

He quit after Congress (I) MPs started a boycott of Parliament to protest police surveillance at Gandhi's resi- See Page 12 Col. 7



Riot police positioned amidst hundreds of thousand of Hindus in New Delhi during a rally Thursday billed as the greatest show of Hindu strength. Demonstrators were demanding the handover of Babri Masjid. —AFP photo

Albanian mourners pledge to end communism

SHKODRA, Apr 3: Tens of thousands of people massed in this grim industrial city Wednesday to honour a "martyr for democracy" and pledged to destroy the communists they blame for his slaying.

The killing and the opposition's angry reaction pushed Shkodra and much of this small Balkan country to the brink of bloody upheaval just days after its first multiparty elections in six decades. At least 50,000 people packed the central square, a nearby park named until re-

cently for Josef Stalin and adjoining streets for the funeral of a local leader of the opposition Democratic Party and two others killed in post-election violence early Tuesday. "People of Shkodra, you are the victims of the communist system of a state that wants to kill its citizens," Sali Berisha, a Democratic Party leader, declared at the funeral.

There were no police in sight during the funeral Wednesday, and Shkodra residents said they thought the local communist party leader-

ship was in hiding. People in the crowd pledged to end communist rule, while relatives of those killed spoke of exacting revenge.

The State Department said Wednesday that Albania's national elections, which the communists won, was tainted by restrictions imposed on opposition parties and other shortcomings.

Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler called on Albanian authorities to investigate charges of electoral

abuses and to redress grievances.

Based on reports from US observers and other international election monitors, Ms. Tutwiler said, it appears the electoral process "fell short" in several key areas of international standards for free and fair elections.

"During the campaign, the opposition parties were allowed only limited access to the government controlled media, although they were allotted some time for televised political broadcasts and were

able to publish newspapers that received partial dissemination," she said.

Official parties enjoyed overwhelming use of state resources, while opposition parties had limited access to these resources, she added.

There are also credible reports, she said, of widespread intimidation of opposition candidates and activists during the campaign and on election day.

"It is questionable why the authorities delayed issuing official election results for over

two days, and that the list of winning and losing candidates contained no vote count," Ms. Tutwiler said.

She said the electoral shortcomings did not invalidate the process entirely. The balloting, she said, was a "first step on the long road to democracy. A partial foundation has been laid for political pluralism and democracy."

Among other groups that sent observers to the election was the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs.